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*THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION*

JAMES BISSETT PRATT

WILLIAMS COLLEGE

As every one knows, psychology is a word to conjure with. We have today the Psychology of Art, the Psychology of Business, the Psychology of Advertising, the Psychology of Childhood, of Adolescence, and of Old Age, the Psychology of various great men and of various centuries and epochs, until one stands quite aghast at the psychological insight of our times, and feels that the key to everything and anything worth knowing must surely be in the hands of the omniscient psychologist. In fact, psychology would seem to have enlarged her bounds at the expense of every other subject, and to have chosen all knowledge to be her province; so that he who desires his book or treatise on any subject whatever to be regarded as strictly "modern" and "scientific" must needs endow it with a psychological title. This is indeed a short and easy method of becoming a psychologist; and the result is—as one might expect—that all the psychology contained in many of these works is spread, usually in large letters, upon the title-page. All is not gold that glitters; neither is every treatise psychological which bears that mystic word upon its cover.

In no field of serious inquiry are these remarks more pertinent than in that of religion. Our book-shelves and our periodicals are laden with works on "religious psychology," most of which prove on examination to be hardly more psychological than anatomical or geographical. Treatises on theology and statistics, on Church history and Sunday-school methods, as well as that large and amorphous class of writings which twenty years ago would have appeared under the title "Philosophy of Religion"—all these are now pressing themselves upon our attention by the use of that potent shibboleth, "Psychology." And yet, though one-half the works with titles of this nature have not much more to do with genuine psychology than with the weather, there is,

I believe, a young branch of scientific inquiry which rightly deserves the name Psychology of Religion.

The attempt to treat the religious consciousness psychologically did not come altogether out of the blue: like other branches of science, it had its precursors of various sorts. The most important of these were anthropology and the history of religion, on the one hand, and the philosophy of religion, on the other. Since the days of Kant it had been customary for writers on the latter subject to take up incidentally the question of the psychological nature of religion, especially in their attempts at defining their subject-matter. These discussions brought out a good many psychological distinctions and descriptions of more or less value; but no attempt was made to collect data and study them inductively in modern scientific fashion. This lack of an empirical basis makes it impossible to accept the results of the various philosophies of religion as genuine psychology; though as the expressions of religious men, and therefore as data bearing on the religious consciousness, they are often of considerable indirect value. The work of the anthropologists, on the other hand, though thoroughly empirical, is from the objective or external point of view, and therefore, while furnishing valuable material to the psychologist, is not itself psychology.

The psychology of religion is therefore, as I have said, a very young branch of inquiry, being in fact hardly more than a dozen years old. I shall not attempt to say who started it. Perhaps no one can justly claim that honor; but, if it can be given to any one man, it must be awarded to President G. Stanley Hall, of Clark University. This I say both because of his own pioneer work in this field and still more because of his guiding influence over a number of young psychologists doing graduate work under him on subjects chosen at his suggestion. Thus was formed what one may very properly call the Clark school of religious psychology.

The work seems to have taken its start in some investigations concerning the various phenomena of adolescence. In 1882 Dr. Hall published an article in the *Princeton Review*<sup>1</sup> entitled "The Moral and Religious Training of Children," in which he empha-

<sup>1</sup> New Series, IX, 26-45.

sized the importance of the years between twelve and sixteen, the sudden changes in both mind and body and the new birth of energy and feeling that take place during that period. This subject was taken up again a number of years later by two graduate students of Clark University, Mr. William H. Burnham and Mr. Arthur H. Daniels, whose investigations,<sup>2</sup> based on empirical data gathered in part from responses to questionnaires, in part from the facts of anthropology, lie well within the field of the psychology of religion.<sup>3</sup>

The investigations thus far referred to, though valuable, owe their chief importance to their pioneer character. It was not until the year 1896 that the first article of great intrinsic value appeared; namely, the first of a long series of important papers by Mr. James H. Leuba (also, at that time, of Clark University), entitled "The Psychology of Religious Phenomena."<sup>4</sup> The subject of the work, as was natural for a pioneer attempt, was that most striking of religious phenomena, conversion. Mr. Leuba went at his task in thoroughly scientific fashion. He collected materials for his study from various sources, especially from the published accounts of the conversions of distinguished leaders, and also by means of a questionnaire. Basing his conclusions on these empirical data, he analyzed the psychological conditions leading up to conversion, the crisis itself, and the state following it; he described the mental condition of the enthusiastic believer (the "faith state"), showed the necessity of self-surrender as a precondition of conversion, and the sudden and passive nature of the transition when it finally came; and thus displayed the psychological basis for the Christian doctrines of faith, justification, pardon, etc. The whole process was treated from the naturalistic point of view, the causal sequences traced, and the idea of supernatural intervention ruled out. "We must conceive

<sup>2</sup> "A Study of Adolescence," by William H. Burnham, *Pedagogical Seminary* I (1891), 174-195.

"The New Life; a Study in Regeneration," by Arthur H. Daniels, *American Journal of Psychology*, VI (1895), 61-103.

<sup>3</sup> If space permitted, mention should here be made of the investigations in the religion of childhood by Hall, Barnes, Brown, and others, carried on at this same time.

<sup>4</sup> *American Journal of Psychology*, VII, 309-385.

of faith," says Leuba, "as supervening upon specific and always identical psychological phenomena."

This naturalistic attitude dominates in a general way all the writers in this field, but no others have carried it through so consistently and emphasized it so strongly and, I may add, so dogmatically, as has Leuba. It is the key-note of nearly all the papers from his pen which have appeared in rather quick succession since 1896. These contributions of his are of varying degrees of excellence; they often repeat each other, and at times attempt too great simplification; yet in their consistent scientific point of view and their keen psychological analysis they form a body of writings of very great value and importance. Professor Leuba is a genuine and able psychologist, and his contributions have a right to the name "psychology of religion." They deserve a much wider reading than they have yet enjoyed.<sup>5</sup>

The year after Leuba's first article appeared, two other graduate students of Clark University, under the influence and guidance

<sup>5</sup> Professor Leuba's rather limited reputation and influence among the reading public may be due in part to the fact that he has never put his contributions in book form. I am glad to be able to add, however, that he is now engaged in the preparation of two books, one a small volume to be entitled *The Psychological Origin and the Nature of Religion* (Constable & Company, London), the other a much larger work, whose title and publisher are not yet determined upon. I give herewith a list of his more important articles in the order in which they appeared:

- "Psychology of Religious Phenomena," *American Journal of Psychology*, VII (1906), 309-385.
- "Introduction to a Psychological Study of Religion," *Monist*, XI (1901), 195-255.
- "The Contents of Religious Consciousness," *Monist*, XI (1901), 535-573.
- "Religion: Its Impulses and its Ends," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, LVIII (1901), 757-769.
- "Tendances fondamentales des mystiques Chrétiens," *Revue Philosophique*, LIV (1902), 1-36; 441-487.
- "The State of Death," *American Journal of Psychology*, XIV (1903), 397-409.
- "Faith," *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, I (1904), 65-112.
- "The Field and Problems of the Psychology of Religion," *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, I (1904), 155-167.
- "On the Psychology of a Group of Christian Mystics," *Mind*, XIV (1905), 15-27.
- "Fear, Awe, and the Sublime in Religion," *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, II (1906), 1-23.
- "Religion as a Factor in the Struggle for Life," *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, II (1907), 307-343.

of Dr. Hall, entered the field, Mr. Edwin D. Starbuck and Mr. E. G. Lancaster. The interest of the latter was chiefly in the adolescent period as such,<sup>6</sup> while the work of the former<sup>7</sup> was wholly upon the religious questions connected with adolescence, dealing in great detail with conversion and religious awakening in its various phases. Like some of its predecessors, it is based on the answers to several questionnaires, and is divided into two parts, first, conversion, and, second, lines of religious growth not involving conversion. One may perhaps fairly question the wisdom of Dr. Starbuck's almost implicit confidence in the questionnaire method; for the responses seem at times to have been accepted and used uncritically, and rather too much is made of figures and statistical tables. Yet it would be ungracious and unjust to throw any doubt upon the genuine value of this admirable work. It presents a mass of valuable data fairly well digested and interpreted, and is of great importance for practical as well as theoretical purposes as a careful and scholarly study of the growth of the religious consciousness. The book deserves the wide reading which it has received, and is one of the two or three most important contributions to the psychology of religion that have yet been made.<sup>8</sup>

Before turning from what I have called the Clark school, I should mention the foundation in May, 1904, by Dr. Hall, of a periodical for the exclusive study of the psychology of religion, the *Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*. Thus far the articles that have appeared in it have been, it must be confessed, rather disappointing. A few of them have been excellent, but very many have had but little genuinely psychological value. The issues of the *Journal*, moreover, have been but few and very far between, and it might rightly be described as being published "every little while." Although it was founded four

<sup>6</sup> "The Psychology and Pedagogy of Adolescence," by E. G. Lancaster, Pedagogical Seminary, V, 61-128.

<sup>7</sup> The Psychology of Religion, London, 1903. (First appeared in the American Journal of Psychology.)

<sup>8</sup> In connection with the Clark school reference should be made to three other contributions: Hylan's Public Worship (Chicago, 1901); Dr. Hall's Adolescence (New York, 1904); and Moses's Pathological Aspects of Religions (Worcester, 1906).

years and a half ago, only seven numbers have thus far appeared. Between March, 1906, and September, 1907, nothing was heard of it, and in the latter month two numbers were issued in one, in the praiseworthy attempt to make up for lost time. Its chief value thus far consists in its reviews of the literature of the subject, and, most of all, in forming a centre for the encouragement of work in this new field.<sup>9</sup>

It may justly be said that the Clark school has contributed almost half the work of any value that has yet been done in this country on the psychology of religion. It was the first to apply empirical methods thoroughly to the study of the religious consciousness. It has collected an immense amount of data, and its chief merit, as well as its chief characteristic, is the emphasis which it has always put upon the value of facts as such. As might be expected, moreover, it has the defects of its qualities. Its fondness for facts seems at times almost a blind craving. Meaning and perspective are often disregarded and forgotten in the worship of the naked fact. The apocryphal tale concerning the *Report on Child Study*, that out of eleven children who were pinched five said, "Ouch!" and six said, "Ou!" seems quite credible to one who has read some of the writings of the Clark School. Thus from one of these (itself in many ways a valuable piece of work) I cull the following: "Stained glass windows were preferred by 149 of 175 who answered the question. Of these, 19 wished pictures in them." Yet it must be said that love of facts is a good fault, especially in a young science. The psychology of religion will not be beyond the early empirical stage for some time to come, and it is a fortunate thing that in its youthful years it has been so largely formed and guided by a body of thorough-going empiricists.

But the men of the Clark school have not been the only workers in this field. Even on the subject of conversion, which has been so exhaustively studied at Worcester, some of the best work has

<sup>9</sup> In this connection I should mention the foundation in May, 1907, of another journal in the same field and with the same object, the *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie*, edited by Dr. Johannes Bresler, in Halle, and appearing monthly. The articles that have thus far appeared in it pay especial attention to pathological religious phenomena. A large part of each number is devoted to excellent reviews of the literature of the subject.

been done by men in other parts of the country. Prominent among these are Professor George A. Coe and Mr. Luther Gulick.<sup>10</sup> Professor Coe's book, *The Spiritual Life*, has been widely read, and has exerted a considerable influence upon the ministry, especially in the Methodist Church. It follows lines similar to those of Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*, dealing chiefly with conversion and religious feeling; and, though without so broad an empirical basis as the latter book has, its facts are critically and safely interpreted. Like Starbuck's book, also, it is of practical as well as theoretical value, and is a useful guide to those dealing with religious problems at first hand. It is encouraging to note that these two investigators, though working quite independently of each other, have reached almost identical conclusions.

The most important single contribution to the psychology of religion is, of course, Professor James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, first given as the Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh in 1901-1902, and later published in book form (London, 1903). Unlike most of its predecessors of which I have made mention, it is not limited to a single topic such as adolescence or conversion, but covers a great number of religious phenomena. The book is so widely read and has been so frequently reviewed that I need not comment upon it here. Like the works of the Clark school, it is thoroughly empirical in its point of view, being based chiefly, not indeed upon responses to a questionnaire, but upon biographies of religious leaders and other individuals whose religious nature has been marked and developed beyond the ordinary. Possibly it is in part the result of this that, on the one hand, the book is entirely without any of those meaningless and ill-digested accumulations of facts which sometimes mar the work of the Clark school, and that, on the other hand, a slightly distorted view of the religious consciousness has been given, much stress being laid on extreme and often abnormal cases, while the average and commonplace is neglected as being uninteresting and uninteresting. Much, however, may be said for Professor James's choice of cases, as it is a well-known fact that any phenomenon can be at least more clearly made out when accentuated, and not overlaid by, nor confused with, a mass of irrelevant material. And certainly,

<sup>10</sup> "Sex and Religion," Association Outlook, 1897-98.



without the assistance of his somewhat extreme types, Professor James would have had some difficulty in building up so good a case for his final thesis as he has done. For his book is not, like most of its predecessors, merely a psychological study of certain varieties of religious experience; it is, in addition to that, an attempt to see whether the facts studied may not be regarded as having some ultimate significance, and as bearing one way or the other on the deeper philosophical questions of religion. As everyone knows, Professor James's conclusion is that these facts are genuinely and deeply significant; that the religious view of the universe is nearer the truth than the limited view of natural science; and that we may accept it as a demonstrable truth of psychology that "the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come."<sup>11</sup>

Professor James's emphasis upon the importance of the marginal region of the mind is criticised in Dr. Irving King's admirable monograph, *The Differentiation of the Religious Consciousness*.<sup>12</sup> This work deals with religion as a social rather than as an individual product, and especially as a tribal reaction among primitive peoples.

Two more books, each dealing with a limited portion only of the general field, should perhaps be mentioned before turning from America to France; I refer to Professor Davenport's *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals* and my own *Psychology of Religious Belief*. The former is a study of the revival from the psychological and sociological points of view; the latter an attempt to analyze religious belief and to discover its psychological bases or elements and its present strength.

The psychology of religion was born and has flourished best in America; and for the very good reason that there is so much religion here to be studied. In this country religion has not been compressed into a formal and uniform mould, as is likely to be the case in Catholic lands, nor has its emotional expression, so interesting to the psychologist, been suppressed by the proprieties and conventions of a self-conscious culture. Something, however, has been done in other countries, particularly in France, on the

<sup>11</sup> Page 515.

<sup>12</sup> Psychological Review, Monograph Supplement, January, 1905.

psychology of religion.<sup>13</sup> But the French psychologists, not having the advantages of the American community with its innumerable and varied living specimens close at hand, have turned to the records of the past for their material. By this I do not mean to imply that France is not a religious country, nor that it cannot furnish a great deal of valuable data for the psychologist. Some excellent work has in fact been done, particularly by M. Arréat,<sup>14</sup> on material gathered at first hand and largely by means of questionnaires, dealing with the religious consciousness in France today. But the expressions of religion in France are so stamped and colored by the forms of an ancient and firmly established ecclesiasticism that they lack the spontaneity and naturalness so prominent in the American type. Hence, as I have said, most of the French psychologists who have interested themselves in religion have sought their material in biographies rather than from questionnaires; and it is therefore in France that we find the best psychological work upon that very important phenomenon, mysticism. Innumerable treatises upon the mystics had, of course, long been compiled—treatises theological, historical, physiological—but no serious study had been made upon them from the strictly psychological point of view until the new school of psychologists of religion entered upon their work.<sup>15</sup> The first of these to take the field was Professor Ernest Murisier, of the Académie de Neuchâtel in Paris. In 1901 he published a book entitled *Les maladies du sentiment religieux*, which formed the starting-point for a considerable amount of genuine psychological work on the mystics. The book is devoted to a study of two kinds of *maladie*, namely, an extreme type of mysticism, and fanaticism. Murisier shows that each of these abnormal phe-

<sup>13</sup> I have already referred to the German periodical of religious psychology, and if space permitted mention should here be made of the work of Vorbrodt, Kinast, Vierkandt, Braasch, and others, as well as of two or three English investigators. In neither of these countries, however, has the psychology of religion been so clearly differentiated from the philosophy of religion as is the case in America and France.

<sup>14</sup> *Le sentiment religieux en France*, Paris, 1903.

<sup>15</sup> Mention should, however, be made of Charbonnier's *Maladies des mystiques* (1874), and Lejeune's *Introduction à la vie mystique* (1899), which, though not chiefly psychological in aim, contain much genuine psychology.

nomena is an exaggeration of a normal tendency: one, of the tendency to unify one's own personality; the other, of the impulse to social usefulness. The title of the book (together with its implications) is unfortunate, being at once too narrow and too broad, implying, as it does, that mysticism and fanaticism are the only forms of religious pathology, and, on the other hand, that all forms of mysticism are pathological. Of course there have been abnormal mystics, and Murisier's study of these is admirable; but to write down mysticism as such, at the very start, as a "maladie du sentiment religieux" is dogmatic and unempirical. If one makes allowance for these defects, however, and reads Murisier's book merely as an analysis of certain admittedly pathological phenomena, he will find it extremely illuminating. Its influence has already been very considerable, and its value as a contribution to this branch of psychology is, I believe, not merely that of a pioneer but intrinsic and permanent. It was a great misfortune to the psychology of religion that Professor Murisier, who gave such brilliant promise, died only two years after the publication of his book.

The unfortunate one-sidedness of Murisier's work on mysticism has in large part been avoided by subsequent writers on this subject—prominent among whom should be mentioned Delacroix, Godfernaux, Boutroux, Leuba, and de Montmorand.<sup>16</sup> The best single article that has yet appeared on mysticism is probably that of Professor Leuba, "Tendances fondamentales des mystiques Chrétiens," which was published in the *Revue Philosophique* in 1902.<sup>17</sup> The same emphasis on the naturalistic point of view that was seen in Leuba's other writings is here especially manifest, and great pains are taken to show that every detail of the mystic's experience can be fully accounted for in terms of physiological psychology. Yet while he resolutely rules

<sup>16</sup> Delacroix's book is entitled *Études d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme* (Paris, 1908). It is not only the latest, but the most elaborate and exhaustive, treatment of the subject yet made.

Boutroux's work appeared in the *Bulletin de l'Institut Psychol. Int.*, that of the others in the *Revue Philosophique*, between 1902 and 1905.—I make no mention here of the work of Binet-Sanglé, as it deals almost exclusively with the pathological side of religion.

<sup>17</sup> LIV, 1-36; 441-487.

out the transcendental, and refuses to attribute any ultimate or metaphysical significance to mysticism, Leuba is quite willing to admit its moral value, and does much greater justice to the mystics than did Murisier.

No one could put the naturalistic view of mysticism, and of religion in general, more clearly or more persuasively than Leuba has done. Yet that another point of view is possible, and that even psychologists may take it, is shown not only by Professor James's *Varieties* but by some of the writers of the French school, notably Boutroux and Flournoy.<sup>18</sup> These men admit all the facts as described by the physiological psychologist, yet maintain that the facts may bear, and that some of them do bear, a philosophical significance which goes beyond the province of physiological psychology.

The psychology of religion of course does not wish to be metaphysics. It would be merely a science, descriptive and empirical, dealing frankly with phenomena, and ranking merely as a branch of general psychology. As such it collects data, compiles statistics, makes comparisons, and seeks to pass from the level of mere facts to classifications, generalizations, and laws. It is with this aim in view that it has made use of purely empirical methods and has sought to formulate its results in purely psychological and physiological terms. Whether it has always been successful in these efforts is indeed somewhat dubious. Its use of the questionnaire method has frequently been uncritical, and its physiological phraseology and fanciful explanations of complex states by diagrams of nerve-paths seem often an attempt at too great simplification; sometimes they impress one as positively ridiculous. Yet, though it has not fully learned the use of its tools, it has maintained with fair consistency a just notion of its proper aim—namely, to discover the facts, and to describe, classify, and explain them.

While all this is true, however, and while every reference to anything "supernatural" is rightly barred out from psychology as a natural science, it might conceivably be found that the facts

<sup>18</sup> Professor Flournoy's most important contributions are the following: "Les principes de la psychologie religieuse," *Archives de Psychologie*, II, 33-57; and "Observations de psychologie religieuse," *ibid.* II, 323-366.

as collected and described could best be explained and accounted for on some hypothesis other than the somewhat naïve naturalism adopted by the majority of scientists. It might, for example, turn out that the data in hand pointed toward some such hypothesis as that of Professor James—a “wider self” or psychic “beyond,” in touch with the subconscious portion of our lives. If further investigations continued to point more and more in this direction, and new evidence for the existence of such a “beyond” were forthcoming, new facts which seemed best explicable on such a supposition, this hypothesis would have to be regarded as a perfectly scientific one, and the “beyond” would not be something supernatural but just one of the regular facts of nature, like the western hemisphere or the process of digestion or the state of hypnosis. The scientist sees nothing supernatural in the luminiferous ether, and he believes in its existence because of certain facts, which indeed might conceivably be otherwise explained, but which seem most simply and fully explicable on that hypothesis. So it might very well be with the psychological hypothesis in question. To maintain that such an hypothesis is “*grundsätzlich ausgeschlossen*,” that it is impossible because “unscientific,” is dogmatic and unempirical, and is an utterly unwarranted playing into the hands of a crude and shallow materialism. It is often forgotten that naturalism of this kind involves a metaphysic quite as truly as does idealism.

And much indeed may be said for such a non-naturalistic explanation. There are certain facts connected with mysticism and the religious consciousness which seem to point in that general direction. The naturalistic school has still a great deal to do before it can prove its hypothesis the only tenable one. In a sense, to be sure, it can explain all the facts of the religious consciousness, just as the Ptolemaic theory can be made to explain all the movements of the heavenly bodies. The question still remains, Is it the best explanation? Until more data have come in, the naturalistic and what I may call the religious hypotheses must run along parallel with each other as rival alternatives. And so long as science looks to experience as its guide and remains genuinely empirical, the truly scientific man will keep an open mind, and though he may believe one of the alternatives to be

false, will remember that further experience may show him to be mistaken, and hence that it behooves him, in the present state of our ignorance, to avoid dogmatism on either side of the controversy.

The question, then, is still an open one. But, on the other hand, we must not forget that the naturalistic hypothesis has proved itself most useful and fruitful in results in all fields in which it has been consistently applied—something which can hardly be said for its rival, which has only too often, in the hands of over-enthusiastic and uncritical supporters, proved a stumbling-block to genuine scientific progress. And it must be admitted, moreover, that while the religious hypothesis has by no means been disproved, it is still far from showing itself indisputably and clearly the best explanation. It is still, like its rival, merely one of two possible alternatives. So long as this is the case, it would seem best for the psychologist, *as psychologist*, to work along the lines laid down by the naturalistic hypothesis, and to seek to explain all the facts so far as possible by means of the laws already clearly established by physiological psychology. If he doubts their sufficiency to explain everything, let him subject them to the test of universal application; for, if they are really inadequate and in need of supplementation, their insufficiency can be shown in no better way. This he should do, I say, as a psychologist; but this in no wise hinders him from holding to whatever transcendental explanation he may, as a religious man or as a philosopher, deem most satisfactory. An idealistic universe may be large enough to embrace a naturalistic science. And while we are still uncertain as to the proper explanation of our facts, the many data of psychology which seem to point toward a religious interpretation of the world, even though they fit in with a naturalistic description, may very properly combine with one's otherwise grounded religious outlook or idealistic philosophy to justify one, *as a man*, in holding to such a belief.

There is, therefore, nothing to hinder the psychology of religion from furnishing philosophy with material which it can use in support of a religious view of reality; and there is much in the recent investigations of the religious consciousness which may well strengthen the faith of the religious man. But it is not

merely on the theoretical side that the new science can be of use to religion. In fact the practical religious worker will gain quite as much assistance from this branch of investigation as will the philosopher or the theologian. The recent elaborate and exact studies in the religion of childhood, the phenomena of adolescence, the nature of conversion and the age at which it is to be expected, and in several other related subjects, cannot fail to be of value to the intelligent pastor, teacher, and parent. And in a more general sense the psychology of religion should be of considerable practical assistance to all those who are seriously studying the larger tendencies of the times and earnestly seeking to contribute their share toward the wise guidance of the community in its religious life.

There is a growing feeling, shared by most close students of the times, that we are in the midst of a serious religious crisis. The almost universal acceptance of biological evolution, the higher criticism of the Scriptures, the naturalistic trend of modern science, and the general increasing demand for independence of thought, are bringing about their inevitable results. The old authorities and the old arguments for the religious view of the world are yearly, even daily, losing their hold over the community. Views which would have been considered downright heresy twenty-five years ago are taught in most of our colleges and theological seminaries and openly preached from our pulpits. Side by side with this intellectual change has come a falling off in church attendance and a loss of prestige on the part of the church in general. And so the question inevitably forces itself upon every serious observer who has the interests of the community and the race at heart, whether religion, if it is to last, must not give up her time-honored trust in the old authorities and seek to draw most or all of her strength from some other quarter.

In trying to answer this vitally serious question we must avail ourselves of every means in our power to see the situation exactly as it is. What, in short, is the real strength of religion in the community? And here we have a right to look for assistance to the psychology of religion. As yet, indeed, but little has been done toward answering this question; but the task of feeling the pulse of the religious community and investigating the real nature

and strength of its religious belief naturally belongs to religious psychology, and, though vast, is well worth its while. An interesting investigation with a somewhat similar aim has just been concluded by the *Mercure de France*,<sup>19</sup> which, though hardly belonging to psychology in the stricter sense of the word, furnishes rich material to the psychologist, and possibly throws some light upon the problem just referred to. The following question was sent out to a number of the leaders of thought throughout Europe: "Are we passing through a dissolution, or an evolution, of religious ideas and of the religious sentiment?" To this question over one hundred and twenty-five answers were received, of which about twenty maintained that religion is destined to dissolution, while a hundred or more insisted that it is imperishable. Of course a mere collection of opinions such as this touches only the surface of the problem. A more thorough going investigation and one more psychological in its nature is that of M. Arréat in the book referred to a few pages back, *Le sentiment religieux en France*. After a careful consideration of the facts at hand, Arréat reaches the conclusion that "France has ceased to be passionately Catholic," and that there is no reason to believe it will ever become Protestant. "The Frenchman gives up the religion of his fathers to turn to scepticism or some philosophy." But, as the writer points out, this philosophy, and even this scepticism, may be, if not essentially Christian, at least thoroughly religious. For the man who is naturally religious will remain so, no matter what his creed; and religious belief is not confined to what we call either Catholicism or Protestantism. For all who desire to inform themselves on the religious condition of France today Arréat's book is invaluable; and investigations of a similar nature in England, Germany, and this country are a decided desideratum.<sup>20</sup> If the study were seriously undertaken by a number

<sup>19</sup> See the numbers for April 15, May 1 and 15, June 1 and 15, and July 1, 1907. Professor Goblet d'Alviella has published a brief summary of the investigation in the *Revue de Belgique*, which was reproduced in translation in the *Open Court* for January, 1908.

<sup>20</sup> Something of the sort has of course been done by a number of writers: cf. Shailer Mathews's *The Church and the Changing Order*, and Dr. Broda's review of the religious situation the world over in the *International* for March, 1908.



of capable investigators and a much greater body of data collected than Arréat was able to gather, it would furnish us with some very serviceable information as to the real status of religious belief and feeling. We can hardly steer our course wisely and successfully unless we know with some approximate degree of exactness just where we are.

There is, however, something of vastly greater importance and usefulness in this matter than statistics, and that is a knowledge of the real nature of religion and of the religious consciousness in general. From what region of man's nature does religion chiefly spring? Where are its strongest intrenchments? If the old authoritative foundations be shaken, is there really any other base to which religion may safely turn? These are, after all, the important questions, and upon them the psychology of religion can speak with authority and with no uncertain voice.

For with almost complete unanimity the workers in this field maintain that religion is a matter of temperament and attitude and demand rather than one of creed and intellectual belief. With this temperament as a basis of division, it may be said that every community is roughly divisible into two classes of people, the religious and the non-religious. The former is probably the larger of the two—in fact, it seems probable that, in this country at least, more people are naturally religious than is generally supposed; we Anglo-Saxons are, on the whole, more likely to hide our deeper feelings than to parade them. Yet it must be confessed that we cannot tell with any exactness the relative size of the two classes. Church statistics certainly throw very little light upon it. For while some of the non-religious class call themselves "sceptics," the majority of them are to be found within the churches. These people have never been religious, and perhaps never can be. Religion has never taken any real hold upon them, and if they believe in God, it is in the same abstract way in which they believe in the Czar of Russia or the binomial theorem. The loss of this belief would indeed result in their ceasing to class themselves as Christians, and might even for a time decrease their respect for morality by removing from them certain traditional restraints and sanctions. We ought therefore to hesitate indeed before shaking their faith in the old authori-

ties. And yet even should this be done—gradually and after a time—we should have no reason to anticipate any very serious results. New abstract beliefs would soon replace the old ones; new moral sanctions would take up the functions of those laid aside; and the individuals themselves, never having known the spiritual life, would suffer no great loss, being quite as religious after the change of creed as before it.

The class of people who are religious, like those who are not, are also found both within the church and without it, among the believers and among the sceptics. They are, of course, of various types, differing both in the kind and in the intensity of their feelings and beliefs. With some the “mystic germ” has been but slightly developed, being a demand or yearning rather than an intuition or an emotional certainty. With some the question of creed is of considerably more importance than with others, and in their case the overthrow of an old doctrine may work serious loss. But for the great majority a creed is but an external thing; and the rejection of one or the adoption of another, though it may mean temporary pain and struggle, is in the long run but an incidental matter. For, as I have said, nearly all the students of this subject in our day as well as in the past agree that religion in its genuine form grows out of the emotional rather than the intellectual nature, or, better still, from the man as a whole, and that the overthrow of an authority or the refutation of an argument has but little permanent effect upon the really religious spirit. In the case of the great majority of what I have called the religious class, underneath the externals of creed and cult, deep down in the hidden recesses of the conscious life, there flows a stream of religious intuitions and demands which are vital and almost instinctive in their nature, and which refuse to be utterly abolished or destroyed by anything that science or criticism can do. Religion is a more vital thing than science; it goes down deeper into life than does any intellectual doctrine: hence its forms and expressions, its creeds and its liturgies, may indeed be altered and destroyed; but through all these changes the essential part of the religious nature remains itself unchanged, serenely defying the power of successive scientific dogmas and shifting “psychological atmospheres.” It is an easy thing to

pick a few leaves from an ancient oak—a child may do it, and when he has done so new leaves will grow again; but to pluck up the oak with all its deep-lying and branching roots—that would be a task that might well prove too much for the strength even of a giant.

An illustration of the vitality of religion after most of its usual modes of expression have been given up is seen in that not uncommon phenomenon, the religious agnostic. It happens not infrequently that men of culture and intellectual power, well versed in the science and criticism of our day, feel themselves unable to subscribe to any creed or to worship with any church, yet find springing up within them a stream of inarticulate but genuine religious experience and intuition which is to them the very water of life. At the risk of proving tedious, let me quote from one such instance, the confession of a French agnostic:

“I seem to feel within the depths of my being an action, a presence; in short, I seem to be the object, even prior to being the subject, of an action that is spiritual. This is in part a rudimentary, half-conscious belief, in part it is simply the expression of a fact, the testimony to a sort of profound and vague sensation. I tell myself that this sensation itself may be an illusion, that there may be nothing real about it apart from my subjectivity; but it *is*, and that is enough for me to live by. . . . It is a part of my being, and has for the rest of my being an importance and a value that are supreme—that suffices me. And for the rest, I tell myself that the very fact that I possess this experience called ‘religious’ is a witness in me to the existence of the inaccessible reality; of the union, within my consciousness, of the me and the not-me; that in it I have in some measure an immediate knowledge of the roots of my being, of a bond between me and something else, this ‘something else’ being necessarily self-conscious since it passes within my self-consciousness. . . . And just because I have become agnostic, and because every intellectual formulation of the inaccessible is for me simply a representation of the Reality, without any value in itself, I feel myself on solid ground. I have the experience there within that I have not to act but to receive; that I have not the initiative but the duty of

waiting and listening; that the source of life is beyond the conscious self, for me, for all men.”<sup>21</sup>

This man is perfectly capable of taking the naturalistic point of view, of looking at his religious experience objectively and seeing that it might be classified as hallucinatory. And yet the experience loses none of its authority, none of its certainty, for him. The naturalistic interpretation he deems quite consistent and tenable; yet for his own part he is convinced that the religious explanation is the true one, and his agnosticism on all points of creed and theology in no wise interferes. He remains a religious man spite of his agnosticism, because this religious experience of his is his very own, and because it has for his life a value that is supreme. And this suggests two important considerations which deserve brief mention here.

The authority of the religious intuition, the “mystic germ,” is seldom or never questioned. As in the case just quoted, this inner experience of the man himself seems inevitably, and in spite of rival and plausible interpretations, to claim for itself an unflinching credence which no intellectual belief, gained by painstaking induction or labored reasoning or external authority, can ever enjoy. And, secondly, if it ever comes to a matter of argumentation at all—which in fact is seldom the case—there is one argument in favor of the acceptance of this inner experience at its face value which, to him who has known it, is usually quite decisive; namely, *its value for life*. In the words of our agnostic friend, it is “enough to live by,” “it is a part of my being, and has for the rest of my being an importance and a value that are supreme, and that suffices me.” We outsiders may classify it learnedly as “*phénomène hallucinatoire*”; but the man himself knows that it is good to live by, life-giving—and “*cela me suffit*.” This fact of the value of religion for life is attested alike by the psychology and the history of religion and by the experience of the common man. And until human nature gets radically changed, it would seem that man will remain a religious creature, quite irrespective of the rise and fall of any dogmas, be they theological or scientific.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from Flournoy, who reports the case at length. See his “Observations de psychologie religieuse,” in *Archives de Psychologie*, II, 327–366.

Of course there is nothing essentially new in all this. Yet it will hardly seem superfluous to have a belief long held on the authority of the intuition of a few confirmed by a painstaking and systematic study of a large body of facts carefully and critically collected and sifted. And in throwing more light upon the essential nature of the religious consciousness, the psychology of religion has contributed something of genuine value for the guidance of all who are trying to deal with the present crisis wisely and well.